

# Spiritan Magazine

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Volume 39  
Number 3 *Summer*

Article 1

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Summer 2015

## Spiritan Magazine Vol. 39 No. 3

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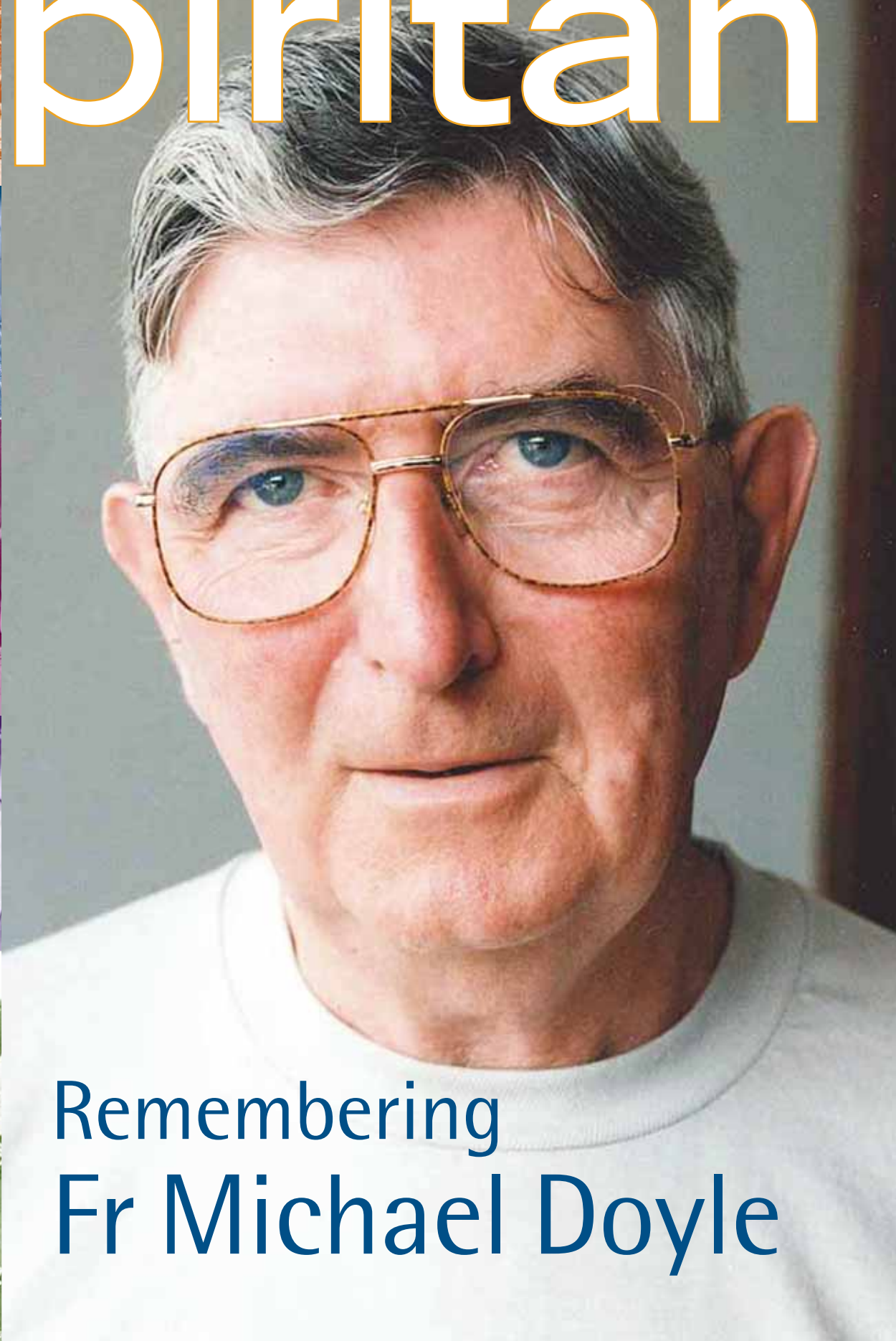
### Recommended Citation

(2015). Spiritan Magazine Vol. 39 No. 3. *Spiritan Magazine*, 39 (3). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol39/iss3/1>

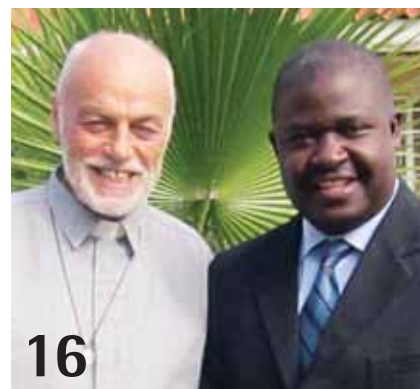
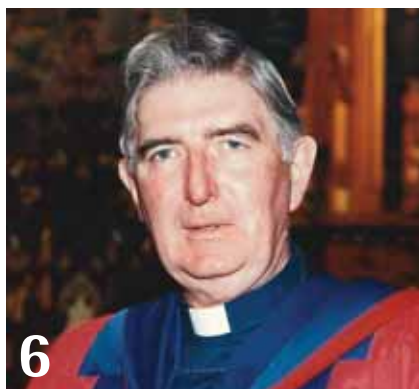
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# Spiritan



Remembering  
Fr Michael Doyle



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# Daily Life and Ordinary Time

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

**"O**utside the church there is no salvation" – it was embedded in us through our learning of the catechism.

We knew that answer by heart – it was only seven words long.

We took it to heart – many reduced it to: "Outside the Catholic church there is no salvation." Were our Protestant neighbours in danger of not being saved?

We took it to heart – small numbers joined the Spiritans (the then Holy Ghost Fathers) or another missionary society so as to go on the foreign missions and convert people – thereby "saving souls."

Was "saving souls" what really animated us? It certainly gave us a sense of purpose and the yearly numbers of so many baptisms "in pagan lands afar" were proudly displayed in our study hall.

We brought our inherited Catholic customs overseas with us and lived by them. We educated others as we ourselves had been educated. Our way was the way. What other way did we know? And in its own way it was a good way – but was it the only way?

Many were "converted" to our way. We baptized them every year. We brought them up as members of our church – after all "outside the church there is no salvation" so come and join the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

Then many began to think differently. Many questioned what they had taken for granted. Others regretted that the catechism question-and-answer approach was giving way to a more open-ended presentation of the gospels and the stories about Jesus and his way of approaching people.

"How many did we convert today?" would not have been uppermost in Jesus' mind. Numbers would appear to have been of secondary importance to him. What really counted was that he made his Father known: "I have made your name known to those you gave me from the world."

They in turn carried his words, his stories, his priorities, his way of life north and west into the small towns of Turkey and Greece and eventually to Rome, northern Italy and across Europe. Ordinary people with little influence, excluded from

high society, told others what Jesus of Nazareth meant to them.

Ordinary people in Ordinary Time: thirty-four out of fifty-two weeks in our church calendar. Day Seven was different – on that day they assembled to retell the stories they had heard from the missionaries who walked among them. "Write it down" someone said and so they began to have the written words we know as the "gospels", the "good news."

The Saturday sabbath they had inherited gave way to the Sunday resurrection as their holy day. For them as for their ancestors time was set aside each week to remember that God breaks through ordinary life. Otherwise they might have forgotten Jacob's words: "God was in this place and I never knew it."

**Numbers would appear to have been of secondary importance to Jesus. What really counted was that he made his Father known.**

Then and now some are tempted to confine God to his one day a week. But that was not what they inherited from their founder – he found reminders of God in everyday life and in the most ordinary of things: the birds of the air, lost sheep, a sower sowing, a mustard seed, lost and found coins, fishing with a net, a caring Samaritan, a son who wonders if he'll be welcome back home.

It has been said, "Jesus makes no new things – he makes all things new." Does our religion – our prayers, our helping one another, our time spent with a shut-in, our phone call to keep in touch, our going to church, our going to work, our stroll along a beach or a river bank, our invitation to a meal – does our religion enable us to live daily life differently?

Jesus spent more time with people outdoors than in a synagogue. He invites us to journey with him in a world "charged with the grandeur of God." ■



# BEWARE — The Holy Spirit!

## Part 2

Anthony Gittins CSSp

We have five channels through which or whom the Holy Spirit speaks and inspires us (see “Beware — The Holy Spirit” Part 1 in the Spring 2015 issue of *Spiritan*). But we can identify another handful that we should look out for — this time obstacles to the workings of the Holy Spirit.

### Five obstacles to the workings of the Holy Spirit

*One:* Sometimes we expect God to work miracles and solve all our problems, so we do nothing. This is muzzling the Holy Spirit.

*Two:* We may fail to look carefully enough for God’s presence in our daily experience. We look for the Holy Spirit in a great mountaintop experience when we should be looking in the highways and the byways, at the street corners and bus stops.

*Three:* There is a danger that we protect our carefully laid plans and initiatives so that nobody, not even the Holy Spirit, can interrupt them. We decide what we’re going to do, and don’t let any-

*“Come Holy Spirit.  
Fill the hearts of your  
faithful and kindle in us the  
fire of your love. Send forth your  
spirit and we shall be created, and  
you will renew the face of the earth.”*



one  
get in  
our way,  
not even  
God. That's  
very, very tragic.

*Four:* Sadly, we  
may have forgotten  
the story of Pentecost, or  
reduced it to the pages of  
history. So instead of becoming  
filled with the Holy Spirit, we be-  
come empty and dis-Spirited. We need  
to have a change of heart; we need to  
be a Pentecost people, with fire and  
focus, with a sense of direction and  
purpose.

*And five:* Perhaps we are not people  
of the Spirit. We even work against her,  
because we're simply afraid of what  
might happen if we were more open,  
trusting, vulnerable. We might just be-  
come fire; we might become a mighty  
wind; we might even become agents of  
change. But then we'd have to risk our  
overcautious and carefully controlled  
lives, and we're not sure we want to  
do that.

So we now have five signs of the  
Holy Spirit trying to communicate with  
us, and five more signs of our resistance  
to the presence of the energy of the  
Holy Spirit. And maybe the Holy Spirit  
herself is inspiring us to ponder them.

## Truly Spirit-led people

Now let's try to identify the fruits of a  
Spirit-led life: what are the signs, and  
what kinds of people are actually living  
with and in the Spirit of God? To put it  
differently, what can we do to become  
a voice of the Holy Spirit, to become  
the sign or the action of the Holy  
Spirit? For consistency's sake, here is  
yet another handful of suggestions.

*First,* the Holy Spirit can be dis-  
cerned in people who actually go "look-  
ing for trouble" — because that's exactly  
what Jesus did! He goes out of his way  
looking for people in trouble, troubled

people. But many people avoid trou-  
ble, people in trouble, and avoid being  
troubled by people. So, one sign that  
the Holy Spirit is near or even in us, is  
that we actually go out and do what  
Jesus did: look for trouble.

*Second,* people who pray to become  
disturbed, more aware, alerted to the  
cries of the poor and to suffering hu-  
manity, lest they fail to hear and re-  
spond to the voice of the Spirit — these  
are truly Spirit-led people. But some of  
us use headphones so we don't hear the  
cries of the poor.

Those animated by God's Spirit listen  
intently: they look and they watch; and  
they say, "I can't do everything, but I  
must do something. What can I do,  
what will I do? Why am I not as dis-  
turbed as Jesus was, and how can I be

**One sign that the  
Holy Spirit is near  
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we actually go out  
and do what Jesus did:  
look for trouble.**

more aware and thereby help change  
and transform the world?"

*Third:* people gathered by the Spirit  
and animated by her are united and yet  
diverse: united in their diversity. We  
don't all have to be the same, but we  
should be on the same side: a team, but  
without uniforms. We don't all need to  
think or understand in exactly the same  
way. We have different perspectives and  
viewpoints — but our unity is stronger  
than our diversity. That's the sign of the  
Holy Spirit.

*Fourth:* people led by the Holy Spirit  
are absolutely convinced they can  
change the world, and they feel instinc-  
tively that if they don't try, they will  
be called to account.

*The fifth and final sign* of  
Spirit-led people is very

tangible: they live exciting and worth-  
while lives; they are not bored, and  
they don't bore the life out of others.  
They don't just sit around doing noth-  
ing; they're animated, excited, even  
inspired. Inspired or in-Spirited: it's the  
same thing when the Spirit is actually  
God's Spirit.

## The Holy Spirit is communicating every day

Here's a terrible statistic. Think of a rep-  
resentative sample of 100 people in the  
world today. Fifty of them are poor. Of  
those fifty, one-third will die of starva-  
tion; another third will be permanently  
impaired; and the final third will be  
forced into stealing, begging or prosti-  
tution. Fifty out of every 100 people  
on earth suffer some form of poverty,  
deprivation, dehumanization.

Worse: the poor are still, relatively  
speaking, the fastest growing group on  
earth, while 1% of the world's popula-  
tion owns 50% of its resources.

The Holy Spirit is trying to be heard,  
and the rich nations are deaf, or imper-  
vious, yet many of their people still  
say every week, "I believe in the Holy  
Spirit," or, "I wish God would do  
something."

Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit is com-  
municating every day in people we  
meet, and every single evening on the  
news. It's tragic that so many good  
people choose who to meet and who to  
avoid, and they tune out or turn off  
bad news at the flick of a switch.  
But it does not need to be this  
way, and every single one of us  
can do something right now.

*"Come, Holy Spirit; come  
now; change our hearts;  
inspire us to think dif-  
ferently — and to go  
and change the  
world."* ■

# A Priest of Far-Reaching Influence

Joe Kelly CSSp

*The life and death of each of us has its influence on others (Rom. 14:7)*

So said St Paul in the passage from his Letter to the Romans that we read just now. He then goes on to write about the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, which brought about our salvation. But everyone, you and I, influence the lives of those around us. Father Michael Doyle's influence was far-reaching.

In a little book of memoirs that he wrote, Michael acknowledges the influence of his parents. He says that his father taught him about truth and honesty and justice, and that from his mother he learned about concern for the poor. She, as a well-read Catholic, accepted the changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council, but thought that the church should change even more.

### "Be kind to them"

I liked Michael's description of an incident in the seminary. As a newly-ordained priest going out to hear confessions for the first time, he went to the office of the director to ask for advice. He refers to the director as Father Mike but the

the third-level students at Centennial College, to the parishioners at St Joseph's, to the people of Papua New Guinea.

Here perhaps I could insert a little story of my first meeting with Father Michael on my arrival from Ireland, where I had just completed my seminary studies. He told me I should register for courses to prepare me for teaching at Neil McNeil High School, but said that, having registered, I should take the train to Montreal. He said, "Here is some money. I am arranging with our confrères in Montreal that you can stay with them for the rest of the week and visit Expo 1967. It will be a good introduction to Canada and to what it is to be a Canadian. Then you can come back and start your courses." On the train, I realized that I had come to a place where people cared about me.

### Centennial College

Of course, there was much more than kindness in this man. His insightful thinking and administrative abilities were recognized by the Ontario government when in 1965 they

asked him to be a member of the board of the yet non-existent Centennial College. His important role in setting up that community college is well attested by the other board members. As Director of Student Affairs, he had contact with students of every religion and of no religious attachment, and he recounts that, far from being a hindrance as some said it would be in a secular college, his priesthood drew people to his office because they knew they could confide in him.

### Empowering others

Later, he was to empower people in Papua New Guinea to run their own Catholic schools, people who told him that previous pastors had made all the major decisions. That wasn't Michael's way — he empowered others. We read of his far-flung parish of Malol, comprising fourteen villages and of his wading through rivers to reach remote places, and we

He will be remembered for leading Neil McNeil High School during a critical period of growth in our board. His commitment to combining the virtues of our Catholic faith with academic achievement had a deep impact on thousands of students.

Angela Gauthier, Director of Education  
Toronto Catholic District School Board

description fits Father Michael Doheny perfectly. He was a man who exercised his authoritative position with an informality uncommon at the time. Father Doheny is sitting in his office, looking as if he has been having a nap in his chair, with his feet up on the desk. The young Father Doyle asks his advice about hearing confessions and the older Father Mike simply says "Be kind to them and you won't go far wrong." Mike Doyle remembered that — our Father Mike was kind to people, to staff and students at Neil McNeil High School, to

marvel at his courage and tenacity. But he loved it – he loved the people, he loved the challenge, he loved the call.

Michael never sought privilege, no matter what position he occupied. He cared about everyone, especially the disadvantaged. In this connection, I should mention the major role he played in setting up and helping out at Sancta Maria House. This was an apostolic work of the Legion of Mary. I have been told that Fr Doyle founded the praesidium of the Legion in this parish of St Joseph. Of course, the people here remember him fondly.

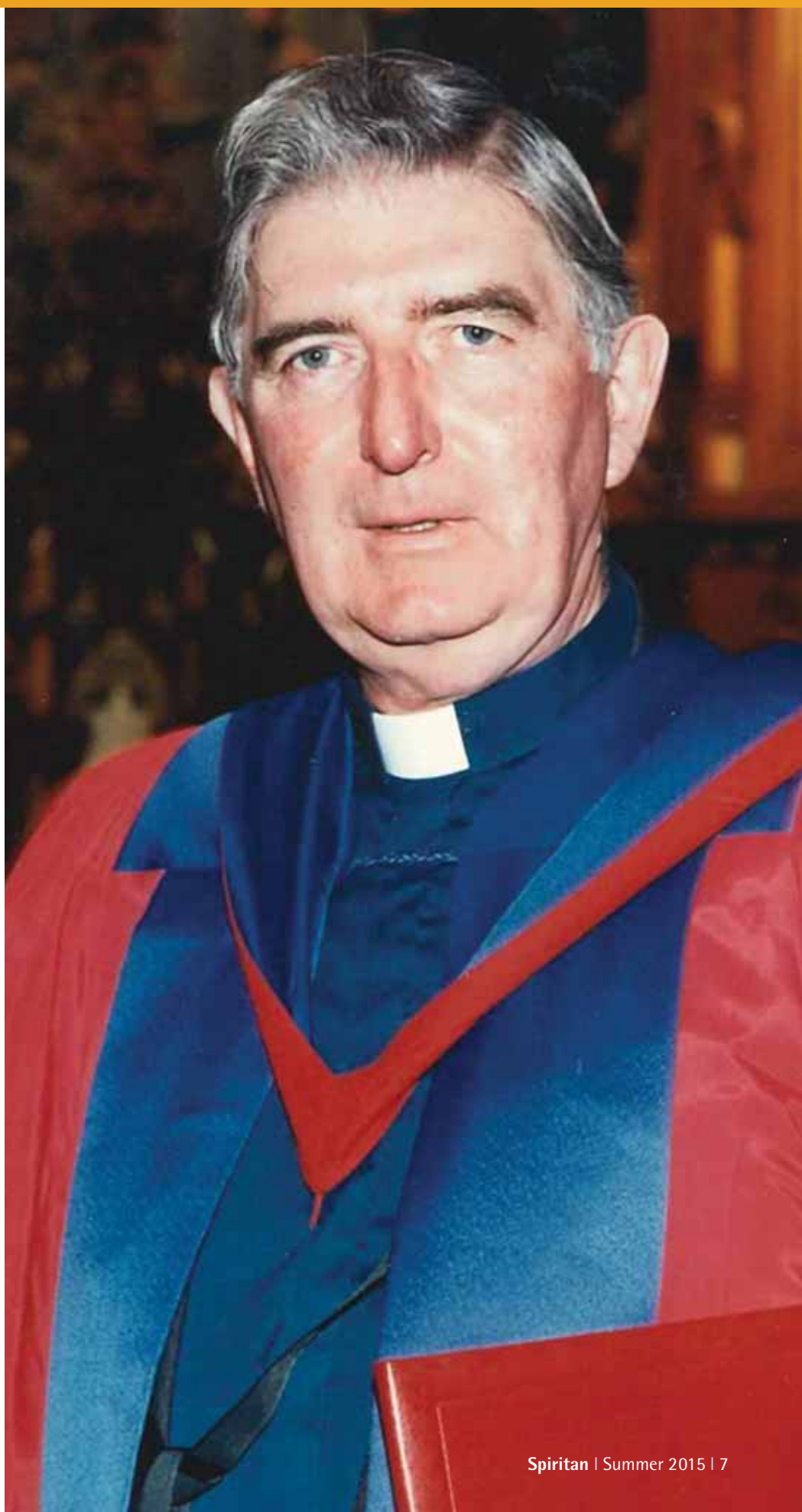
### **St Joseph's Parish**

He had two periods of ministry here, so I don't have to tell you about his time with you, but I will tell you what he wrote about you and his time here: "A marvellous experience, so much good will, so many deeply spiritual people, such extensive commitment to the less fortunate in our society; sixty-seven different nationalities working together in harmony and creating a miniature example of a peaceful world in this corner of the 'little blue dot.'"

When he was in Papua New Guinea in 1986, we Spiritans were planning a General Chapter Meeting in Rome. Michael was disappointed that there would be no delegate from Papua New Guinea and Australia. He let the General Council know of his disappointment. They said it was too late to change this but, as these confrères would not be electing a delegate, the General Council invited him along as an observer. Well, he so impressed them in Rome that he was elected first assistant to the Superior General. So it would be years before he could return to Papua New Guinea and Australia.

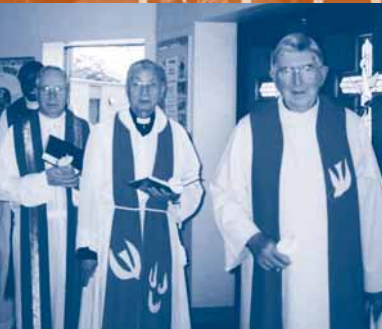
### **Spiritans Leader**

Michael was forward-looking and innovative, inclusive and inviting, cheerful (in a quiet way) and positive. He also challenged the status quo in the Church, on such issues as the role of women. Of





# REMEMBERING FR MICHAEL DOYLE



course, I have already said that his mother taught him to put forward these challenges. His nine years as our Provincial Superior here were marked by a number of innovations. He and the Provincial Council made the courageous step of separating our group from the Irish Province – which up to then had provided the personnel – and setting up a province of our own, the Province of Trans-Canada. This again showed how he wanted people to take ownership and to face the future with optimism.

## Lay Spiritan Associates

The General Council in Rome had decided to look into new forms of Spiritan membership, and Father Michael was the one who invited Dermot and Deirdre McLoughlin to search with us for an answer to their own desire for Christian and missionary commitment, and so there came to be in our Province of Trans-Canada the Lay Spiritan Associates, who have enriched our lives and extended our outreach in so many ways.

## Final poignant years

"The life and death of each of us has its influence on others." I have spoken of Michael's life. But his death, too, has its influence on us. Remembering his leadership qualities, and his achievements in education, makes our reflection on his death, and on the last few years of his life, all the more poignant. Seeing him sitting there, unable to respond to us, teaches us

that we can never say for certain what the future holds for us, or how much we will accomplish. Ultimately, we can only rely on God to sustain us. We make the effort but never fully know the real outcome. Leaving that to God, we continue to make the effort. We hope that we can do it with some of the enthusiasm that Father Mike brought to what he did.

His final years gave others the opportunity of ministering to him, and that was a blessing for those who did. On them, his gradual passing has had an enormous impact. In this connection, we Spiritans thank Josie Whelan for her continuous care of Father Michael. We also thank the staff at Providence Centre and at La Salle Manor.

This day will come for each of us. We have really no say in the way death comes. The people we meet every day are people for whom Jesus lived and died and rose again, so let each of us have a positive influence on them, treating them with kindness and concern and the dignity that is theirs. I think that the way Michael lived should reinforce that resolve in each of us.

Our sincere sympathy goes to Michael's sister, Olivia, and to his nephew, Clive, who are with us today, to his sisters, Oonagh and Mary, and to all of Michael's family in Ireland, Australia and elsewhere. You were with him from the beginning and you have learned from him and he from you. May the Lord comfort you in your loss. ■

One does not often meet people of the calibre of Michael: persistent in his vision that all people have the opportunity to develop the ability, passion and imagination to pursue their dreams and to contribute to the human community.

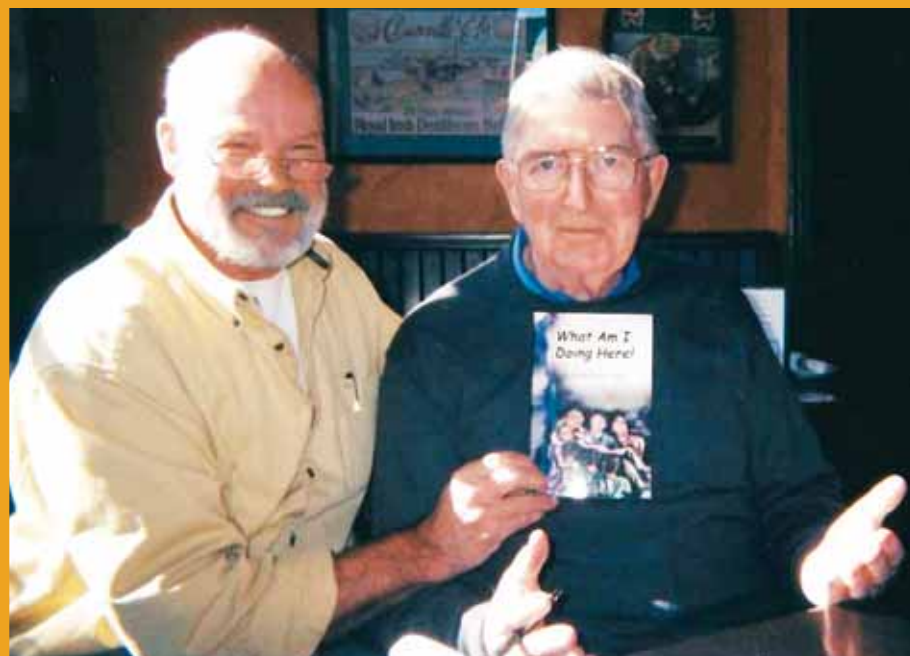
Springing out of his Irish roots, Michael was a delightful man "of the old school". He had a great gift for telling stories, and a lifestyle that was community centred, simple and unencumbered. A genuine goodness radiated out of Mike in the most unexpected ways and at the most unexpected times.

No pretenses, no masks — people naturally gravitated towards him, wanting to somehow tap into his energy, strength and faith. Each person walked away feeling special, refreshed and revitalized for the journey ahead.

This was most evident for us at Becoming Neighbours in his compassionate concern for what was happening with refugees.

We will hold Michael in our prayers. But in reality, Mike doesn't need our prayers, does he? We need his.

*Peter McKenna SFM, Becoming Neighbours*



Excerpts from  
Fr Mike's book  
*What Am I  
Doing Here!*

# Seeking pastoral advice

Michael Doyle CSSp

I HAD FINISHED the course, passed the exam, been granted “faculties” to hear confessions and was now about to head out into one of the parishes of the Archdiocese of Dublin.

Panic gripped me. Despite ten years of training I was terrified that insoluble problems would be dropped on my lap or that I would make a horrendous mess of the whole process. I needed a word of advice, in a hurry.

Our Director at that time was a man who had spent many years in the African mission field. He also held a doctorate in Canon Law so I surmised that both his experience and education would amply equip him to share a few words of wisdom with a jittery neophyte confessor.

I went to his office, knocked timidly on the door and entered on invitation. Father Mike was seated in a swivel chair with his feet resting on his desk. This was not the usual deportment of superiors at that time, but Father Mike had brought a breath of informality to the position.

I explained, a little nervously, my problem and asked what advice he would give to a young priest about to enter the confessional for the first time. Father Mike’s eyes were heavy — indicating that I had disturbed a catnap. He looked at me sleepily for a long minute and then said, “Be kind to them.”

I continued to stand there expecting some elaboration, or at the very least, some reference to canonical and theological norms.

But Father Mike’s eyes were drooping and it was clear that I was about to lose

him. I coughed and asked hesitantly, “Is that all?”

With obvious effort he blinked away the glaze that had begun to resettle on his eyes and said, “Yes, that’s all. Be kind to them and you won’t go far wrong.”

It was one of the best pieces of pastoral advice I have ever received. ■

*From What Am I Doing Here!, Fr Michael Doyle CSSp. Welland, Ontario: éditions Soleil publishing, inc., 2006. Reprinted courtesy of the Publisher.*

He knew the issues and he knew what was going on. We recruited him to be a board member and Fr Mike was on our board for four years and chaired our social justice and advocacy committee. He was able to supply that on a larger scale by helping us to address the needs of those who are oppressed and marginalized.

It was just terrible to see such a strong intellect and somebody so full of life have this terrible disease — he is home and I think that is a good thing.

*Michael Fullan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Toronto*



## A Knock on the Door

Michael Doyle CSSp



**A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.** It was 11:30 p.m.

“Fata, yu stap? Mipela i gat bikpela wari.” (“Are you there, Father? We’ve got a big problem.”) In any part of the world a knock on the door close to midnight would probably indicate a serious problem – more so in Papua New Guinea since it wasn’t customary for the villagers to travel around much after dark.

A sleepy missionary at the door listened to the villagers pour out their concerns: a woman in childbirth was having serious difficulties; the midwives had done all they could, but by now she needed more expert help. If she didn’t get to hospital, and quickly, she might lose the baby – indeed her own life was also at risk.

In the First World the solution would have been simple: dial the emergency number, order an ambulance and in no time the woman would be on her way to the nearest hospital. But this was Papua New Guinea – there was no phone, no emergency number and, even if a number existed, there was no ambulance. The only reliable truck in the village was that owned by the mission.

woman in labour comfortable on a bumping trailer?)

Then it was off through the bush on a mile and a half ride to the banks of the Yalingi River. The mission truck was on the far side and the only way to reach it was by wading through its turbulent waters. This river, about 80 metres wide, had no bridge, no ferry. Debbie had to be carried across. Since it was forbidden for men to approach a woman in labour, this task was to be accomplished by women. The men generously suggested that since the taboo didn’t apply to “Fada”, I could give the women a hand. It was pitch dark. The river was about chest high, swift flowing and quite scary. I went across first to turn on the lights of the truck and then returned to help the women.

As I waded through the water which tugged at my legs and chest, struggling to keep balance while at the same time helping to keeping the pregnant woman out of the water, I couldn’t help thinking that in ten years of seminary training no one had ever mentioned this kind of enterprise. What on earth was I doing here?

We reached the far bank and hoisted our soon-to-be mother as gently as we could into the 4x4 Toyota Hilux. Then we were off through the bush, another 25 kilometres, on a dirt road pock-marked with craters

and protruding rocks. It must have been agony for the poor woman, but she never even groaned. Finally at about 2 a.m. we arrived at the local hospital, a very modest affair compared to our sophisticated western health centres, but, nevertheless, adequate to the occasion. The doctor, a lay missionary, was summoned from his bed and very quickly Debbie’s problems were brought under control.

For me it was back again through the bush across the river and on to the mission, this time

I wasn’t in the same parish as he was in Papua New Guinea, but I can tell you that all the people there – his parishioners and the Sisters with whom he worked – thought the world of him. He was really concerned about the individuals he was dealing with. He always tried to include people in the church.

*Paul McAuley CSSp*



“O.K. I’ll bring her in.” And so started an extraordinary journey.

First it was necessary to collect Debbie from her village some distance from the mission house. Luckily the mission had a tractor-trailer, which coughed and wheezed and rattled and banged, but at least it moved.

The driver was roused from bed and we were on our way to Debbie’s house. We loaded her on to the tractor trailer and made her as comfortable as possible (but how do you make a



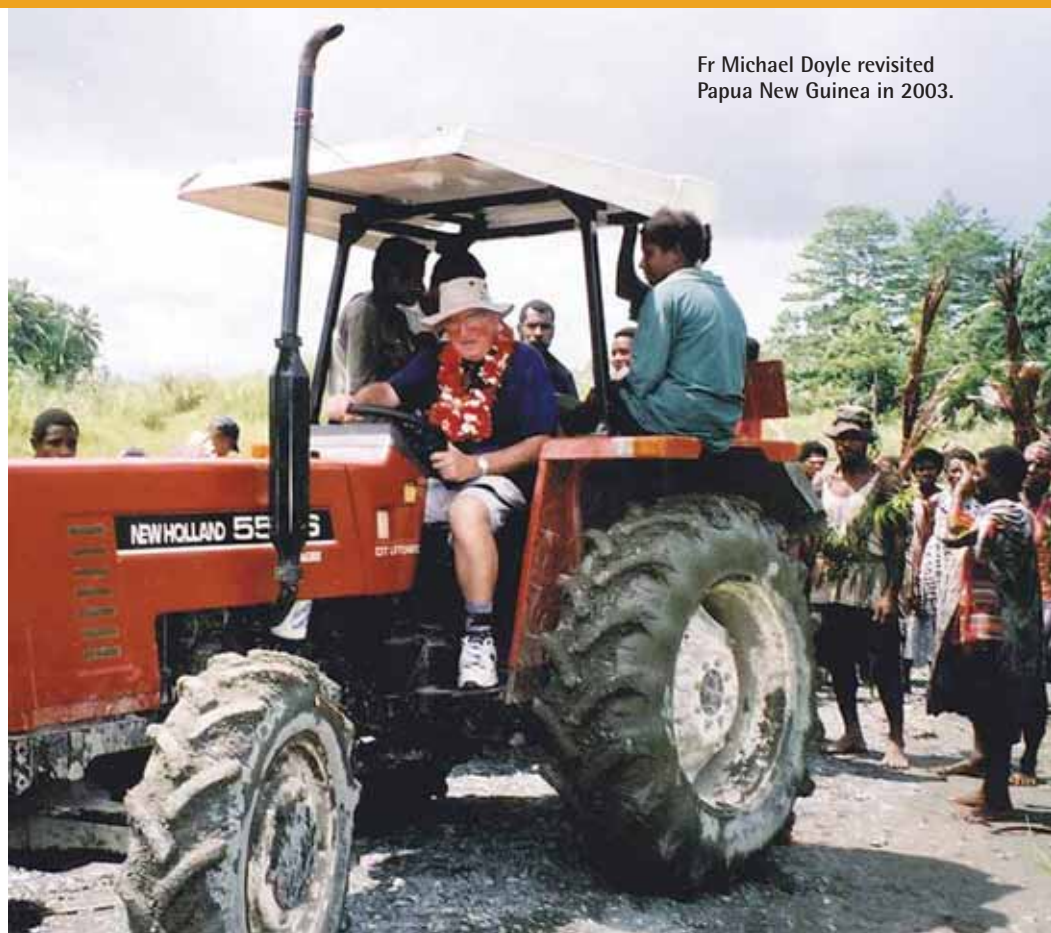
on foot because the tractor driver had put away his machine for the night. Next morning, the “sked” (the short-wave radio system used by the mission) brought us the good news that mother and child were doing fine. A few weeks later it was a real joy to baptize the newborn child and to be able to thank God for using me as an instrument to help save his young life and that of his mother.

This experience was repeated often, sometimes because of difficulties with birth, sometimes because of other life-threatening diseases or accidents. More often than not, these unexpected emergencies often disrupted well-laid plans. But it must be said the mission team (sisters, catechists and myself) never hesitated. We were convinced that this was evangelization by example.

## Two men and their two dead cows

On one occasion the 11 o'clock knock on the door revealed two men from a neighbouring parish whom I didn't know. They too had a “wari”, not a woman in labour or the victim of an accident – but two dead cows. What! That's right – two dead cows they had slaughtered on a model farm some way up the river with the intention of bringing them to town to put in the freezer and later to process and sell the meat.

This was a government project shared in by a number of the villagers who had received training in animal husbandry at an agricultural institute overseen by the mission. The graduates were each given a cow and the fencing necessary to keep the animals from straying. The two dead cows were part of the fruits of this project and were on their way to town to generate income for the villagers. But, as often happens, their plans had come unstuck. As a result of engine trouble, the boat which was to bring the dead cows from the farm had been delayed and the two men, who were actually officials from the Agricultural Department, had



Fr Michael Doyle revisited Papua New Guinea in 2003.

reached the river Yalingi late in the afternoon, long after the truck driver scheduled to meet them had given up and gone home.

Now here they were with two dead cows, which would certainly spoil by the following morning. Would I bring them into town and save the day?

“O come off it, you must be kidding. Pregnant women or accident victims – OK, but two dead cows!”

They were persistent and with the tenacity of their race gradually wore down all opposition. They conjured up images of the people who were depending on this farm for their livelihood; those who had worked for months to develop the project; the people who would be deprived of meat if these cows spoiled – and on, and on, and on. Besides – the Agricultural Department would fill my truck with diesel (no small consideration in a country where fuel prices were sky high) and if ever in the future I needed a favour ...

And so we were on our way following

much the same routine as with pregnant women: a tractor to bring the cattle through the bush to the banks of the Yalingi, then across the swift flowing waters in pitch darkness, the legs of the cattle tied together with a pole slung between them. This time, taboo or not taboo, I didn't get involved in the crossing.

Following a rough journey through the bush with eight bovine legs sticking up in the air, we reached town where the cattle were dumped into the freezer of the Agricultural Department.

The two officials were good to their word and filled the truck with diesel. They also sent back the story to the grateful farmers with the result that the prestige of the mission rose several percentage points. I guess, as St Francis loved to point out, proclaiming the gospel does not always need words. ■

From *What Am I Doing Here!*, Fr Michael Doyle CSSp.  
Welland, Ontario: éditions Soleil publishing, inc.,  
2006. Reprinted courtesy of the Publisher.

# Pope Francis on Saint Francis

I do not want to write this encyclical without turning to that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as my guide and inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome.

I believe that St Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast.

He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself.

He showed us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace ...

Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology ... takes us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them "to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason." ... To him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists ...

If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.

The poverty and austerity of St Francis were ... a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.

What is more, St Francis, faithful to scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness ... For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the creator of such beauty. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise. ■







# Canticle of the Sun

St Francis of Assisi

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!  
All praise is Yours, all glory, honor, and all blessing.

To You, alone, Most High, do they belong.  
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures,  
especially through my lord Brother Sun,  
who brings the day; and You give light through him.  
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!  
Of You, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the Stars;  
in the heavens You have made them bright, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,  
and Clouds and Storms, and all the weather,  
through which You give Your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water;  
she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom You brighten the night.  
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,  
who feeds us and governs us,  
and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of You;  
and who endure sickness and trials.

Blessed those who endure in peace,  
for by You, Most High, they will be crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Bodily Death,  
from whose embrace no living person can escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!  
Happy those she finds doing Your most holy will.  
The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks,  
and serve Him with great humility.



# Our Spiritan Vocation

Dan Sormani  
CSSp

Our Spiritan headquarters here in the U.S. is located right next to our retirement community, so whenever I'm back, I find myself with the elders of our Spiritan family. Over the years I have walked into the chapel or dining room to see men in their 70s, 80s, 90s, a scattering of walkers and wheelchairs often waiting nearby.

And it is a kaleidoscope of our history – men who shared the Good News of God's love in many countries on different continents, men who wrote books of thought and insight, men who founded parishes and schools and built them from the ground up, men who were truly prophets in their day, defying mayors, governors and bishops in the tumultuous '50s and '60s to integrate schools and parishes to bring unity and dignity to all. In their various missions they were very often larger than life, legends in their own time, giving of all they were and all they had.

And now I see them here: the strong, vibrant heroes and role-models of my young days as a Spiritan now in a new chapter in their lives, in my life. Some are quite warm and welcoming, some can be quick and easily disturbed. Some, though their bodies be a bit worn and tired, are still sharp with an insight or piece of wisdom; some forget where they are.

They remind me  
that there are  
no monuments  
to ourselves;

that we are here  
to give all we can;  
that we are on  
a journey and  
we must  
keep moving.



## "Weren't you my philosophy professor?"

It is strangely humbling for me to be with them, though just for a short time every few years when I am back. One Father in his late 80s kept looking at me one morning and suddenly blurted out, "Weren't you my philosophy professor?" He would have done philosophy in the late 1940s, but I guess I look like I age well. I tried to explain again who I was, but I think I only confused him more. A few days later he posed the same question, and I waved a warning finger at him saying, "Ah, and your assignments!! Really!!" He laughed so hard and I suddenly saw him as a 20-year-old with his whole life before him, listening for the daily beckoning of God, wondering if he would indeed become a priest and where he would be assigned. He listened, he heard, and he followed. May we all do the same!

## He began to talk about love

At an important meeting of Spiritans from all over the country and even some from abroad, I sat near a confrere in his early 80s who forgot the batteries for his hearing aid and so, unwittingly, shouted all the time, often interrupting proceedings and, as they say, "showing his age". But when we began to share on what it means to be a Spiritan, he began to talk about love, God's great love for us which, as St Paul said, impels us to love everyone around us. It is our love that counts, and everything, all the fine works we engage in, must always be filled with love. I knew much of his history in the community, but he never mentioned all the amazing things he had accomplished in his years of ministry. He only talked of God and of love, and that God is love. He ended by quoting John 13:35: "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

## After a lifetime of being "the helper"

I am touched and challenged at how these men are called to adapt to a whole new way of life, how they must now live visibly the often repeated phrase that what counts is "who we are, not what we do." They remind me that there

are no monuments to ourselves; that we are here to give all we can; that we are on a journey and we must keep moving. And as I see these once strong, dynamic missionaries and educators being given their pills and shots by the smiling

members could spend some time with our elders during the year. He thought it would be a good idea and said it would be good for the elders. But actually I was seeing it from a whole other perspective. I keep thinking of how much

*He* never mentioned all the amazing things he had accomplished ... He only talked of God and of love.

nursing staff, as I watch them help each other with walkers and wheelchairs, as I pray with them in chapel, I wonder how difficult it must be to accept so much help from others after a lifetime of being "the helper". Being with them reminds me of patience, acceptance, humility, honesty. Moving into this stage of life's journey is "Let Go and Let God" embodied. It is a special kind of holy ground.

I recently mentioned to a fellow Spiritan that I wished all our younger

we, still young and healthy enough to be quite active, could learn so much from being with them. It is, in fact, a new ministry that the elders may not even realize they have ... to remind the rest of us who we are, why we do what we do, and that in the end, it is only our love that we take with us – and leave behind. ■

Reprinted from *One Heart, One Soul*, newsletter for the Province of the United States, July-August 2015.



**Robert di Nardo CSSp**

He was on the cover of *Spiritan* Spring 2015. Not Bishop Nguyen – but Fr. Robert di Nardo, newly ordained. Now – Catholic Priest Chaplain at St Michael's Hospital in downtown Toronto.

Fr. Robert had hoped for such a ministry and a vacancy came at the right time in this "parish within the hospital": baptisms, anointing of the sick, daily Mass for staff and patients, visiting all the new Catholic patients: introducing himself, telling patients of the services on offer, asking them what they might like from him.

His first impressions: "No two people are quite the same. Taking time to listen – hearing about good and tragic experiences. What a busy place a hospital is, how fast paced. What a wonderful ministry hospital chaplaincy is."





# Missionary Outreach in Southern Africa

Sylvester Kansimbi CSSp

**R**ecently in Malawi, at the ordination of six Spiritans — five deacons and one priest — the Archbishop of Blantyre, Thomas Msusa remarked, “This is a bumper harvest. I have ordained you as deacons. I want to ordain you as priests. I want you to take on some more parishes in the archdiocese.”

## Beginnings

The arrival of the Spiritans in Malawi was a result of the Nigerian Biafra war that forced so many missionaries, among whom were the Irish Spiritans, to leave the country. The war broke out on July 6, 1967. It was the culmination of the uneasy peace and stability that had plagued Nigeria since its independence in 1960. A coup and counter coup in 1966 had altered the political equation and destroyed the fragile trust existing among the major ethnic groups. The result was a bloody civil war.

## Arrival in Malawi

The Archdiocese of Blantyre appealed for priests in the beginning of 1969. The following July their appeal was received favourably by the Irish Province. The first Spiritan group from Ireland

were in Nigeria and you left following the war. You will not leave Malawi. Here your home will be in the hearts of Malawians.” True to these words, Fr Foley worked in Malawi until 2002 when he left to go back to Ireland.

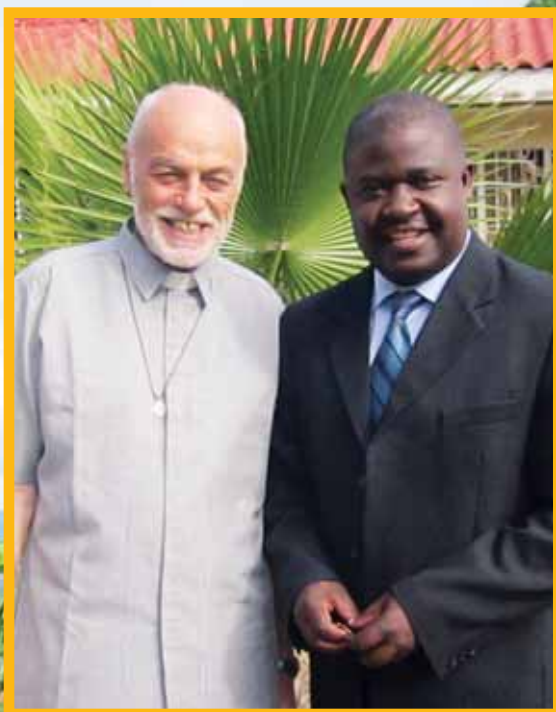
The civil war in Nigeria caused the expansion of the Spiritan missionary outreach. Many missions were opened as a result of that. Malawi was one of them. It became our great home.

arrived in Malawi in 1971. Three more groups came that same year so that by Christmas ten Spiritan priests were ministering in the Archdiocese.

Bishop James Chiona heartily welcomed them. Fr Shay Foley recalled the Bishop’s words to him: “I want you and your Congregation to help in the building of the diocese. Let us weed together in the garden of the Lord. I heard you

Fr. David O’Connor recalls his first months in Malawi: “By the time we arrived in Malawi, Blantyre was the stronghold of the Montfortian Fathers and so our coming in such a big number within a year posed a challenge to them: are the Spiritans coming to take over from us?” “For me,” Fr O’Connor said, “the question of taking over was off base. The Bishop asked for personnel





Above: Sylvester Kansimbi  
and Locky Flanagan  
Right: Conor Kennedy



## Fr Conor Kennedy

One of the key people and godfather of many young

and there we were at the service of the local Church."

Fr David was Superior of the Malawi International Group for over 25 years. I joked about it after he retired to Kimmage Manor, Ireland and he answered: "It was not my choice to serve for such a long time. Instead, I found joy in serving as a priest. My focus was not about me as a person, but about me as a Spiritan called to do the work of Christ."

Asking Fr Jimmy Murphy about his missionary life in Malawi, he replied, "The Lord has always better plans. After Nigeria, we were tempted to say, 'What next? Where to now?'" The Holy Spirit can blow us anywhere. We needed the Lord to put things straight for us. In fact, the civil war in Nigeria caused the expansion of the Spiritan missionary outreach. Many missions were opened as a result of that. Malawi was one of them. It became our great home. The language was easy to learn and the people were so friendly."

## TransCanada Province joins the Malawi team

In 1973 Spiritans from the Province of TransCanada joined the Calgary Diocese in a mission outreach to Malawi. At one point, five Spiritans and two diocesan priests were teamed together. The Spiritans included Frs Conor Kennedy, Paddy O'Donohue, Locky Flanagan and Louis Cassidy.

But the Spiritan presence in Chikwawa Diocese did not last long. In 1983, for various reasons, all had left the diocese to return to Canada. All apart from Conor Kennedy. Locky Flanagan, who had left to return to his home Province in Canada, later returned to Malawi and joined the Spiritan group in Blantyre Diocese. He is currently in Harare, Zimbabwe as lecturer and spiritual director at Poullart des Places seminary and Holy Trinity College.

Malawi Spiritans was Fr Conor Kennedy who passed on in 2011 in South Africa. It is not easy to describe Conor! He inspired many young Malawian confreres. He went out of his way for the sake of the Gospel. Some older confreres in Malawi misunderstood him — but the young understood him and followed his way and style of life. He needed no interpreter. He always said what he meant — straightforward. He showed the young the face of Christ and connected them to the charism of the Spiritan Congregation. From him, in collaboration with the other Irish confreres in Malawi, new blood flowed in the Malawi Group. Together with other confreres like Heinz Kuckertz (Germany) and Michael Walsh (Ireland) Conor played a major role in the birth of the South Central African Foundation (SCAF) to which Malawi belongs.

## New Blood in the Group – from West and East Africa

Initially, there was a need to get young confreres who would help in the work of formation. In 1993, a request for personnel was sent to the West African Foundation. The response was favourable – in 1994, several West Africans arrived.

Then East African Spiritans from Tanzania and Kenya came to join the group in both formation and various pastoral involvements. The group was further strengthened by the coming of two other Irish confreres specifically for formation work.

## Local Vocations and Balaka

The first group studied philosophy at Njiro Seminary (Arusha, Tanzania). Later on South Africa proved to be a more suitable place so those from Njiro were sent there to study in a five year program combining both philosophy and theology.

All these arrivals from Tanzania and South Africa were paving the way for Balaka Inter Congregational Seminary where philosophical studies were in



Sylvester Kansimbi and Locky Flanagan with seminarians.

moment – though challenging. We did not have our own house and we had to stay with the Carmelites for a year or two. In such cases, I assure you that you cannot live the way you want according to your charism and spirituality. But, thank God, within a short time, in 1995 we started the construction of our house. By then there were five students.”

congregations, and as a community at the Spiritan House where there were about 50 students from 15-17 countries.

Then a decision was made to join Holy Trinity College, Zimbabwe for theological studies. In 2004, those who were in Tangaza joined the community in Harare. Currently there are over 20 Spiritan students doing their Second Cycle formation program at Holy Trinity College alongside the Carmelites, Capuchins, Conventual Franciscans, Redemptorists, Marianhill Missionaries and Bethlehem Fathers.

Fr Conor Kennedy showed the young the face of Christ and connected them to the charism of the Spiritan Congregation.

progress since 1986 as an initiative of the Comboni and Montfort Fathers. Balaka was more central for all the students within the Spiritan South Central African Foundation. So a decision was made to start sending the students there for philosophy.

The first rector was Irish Spiritan Fr Roddy Curran, later joined by Fr Tony O’Boyle. While waiting for their own house the Spiritan students and Fr Roddy stayed with the Carmelite Community. Fr Tony died in Malawi in 2001 and is buried at the entrance to the newly built Spiritan House at Balaka. He is the first to be greeted as one enters the Spiritan compound.

Talking about the Balaka beginnings, Fr Roddy remarked: “It was a great

It is believed that Fr Roddy’s starting capital was 1,300 pounds. However, the Montfortian Fathers and Brothers rescued the project and helped the Spiritan House get off the ground. Two years later, the house was opened in October, 1998.

## Theological Studies in Tangaza, Nairobi and Holy Trinity College, Zimbabwe

The first Malawian students joined students from Mozambique and Zambia in Nairobi to study theology at Tangaza – by then, a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Tangaza was a great place in terms of internationality both in the college, where there were over 70 religious

## Spiritans Pastoral Involvements

The newly ordained joined many other Malawian confreres to work in various pastoral involvements. Since the arrival of Fr Sylvester Kansimbi, the first Malawian priest in 2001, there are currently 8 Malawian Spiritan priests, 5 deacons, 8 others currently in the Second Cycle, 4 in the novitiate and about 10 in the First Cycle of formation.

Pastoral involvement in Malawi has primarily been in the dioceses of Blantyre and Dedza where Spiritans are working in very large parishes. In these two dioceses, they have sown a unique charism with a Spiritan identity. Many lay people are following a Spiritan way of life and are becoming a backbone of support for Spiritan initiatives and in the formation of Spiritan candidates. ■



# Spiritan Archbishop Receives Peace Prize

This year the city of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) awarded its annual peace prize to Spiritan Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga of Bangui, Central Africa and Imam Kobine Layama. In May, *Africa Review* wrote:

**D**ieudonne Nzapalainga's debonair manner conceals a tough-minded streak and, at 48, Bangui's archbishop has emerged as a key player in efforts to end the crisis in the Central African Republic. Combined with his charisma, his position as the head of the only functioning institution with a nationwide foothold in a country where the government's authority barely extends beyond the capital, has bestowed him with formidable power.

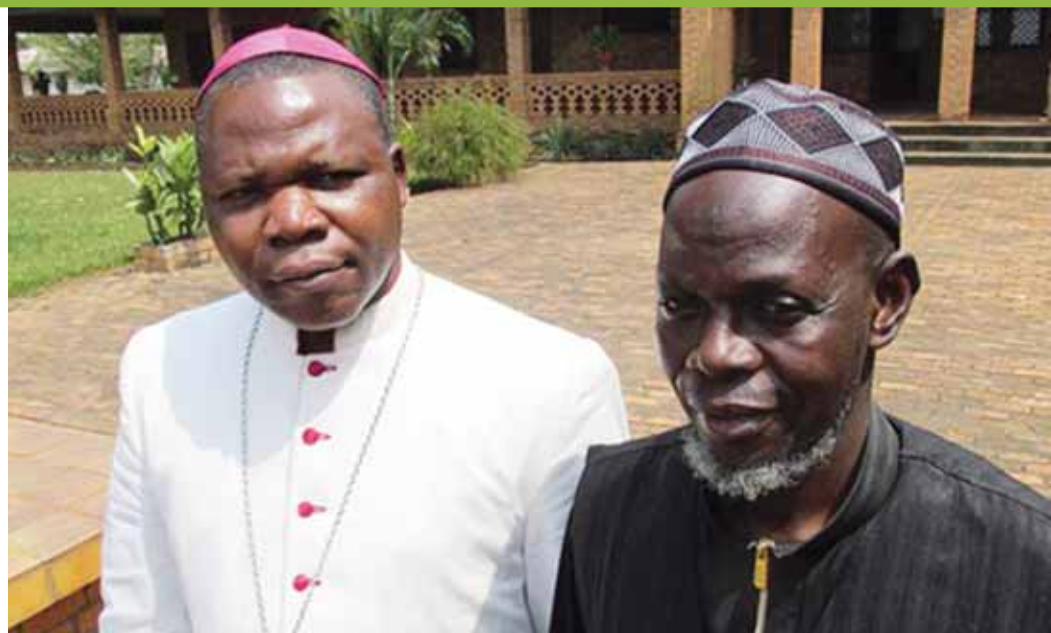
Born in 1967 to a Roman Catholic father and a Protestant mother of modest means, Nzapalainga was appointed archbishop in May 2012. Renowned as a first-rate orator, he was very vocal in condemning the sectarian strife that erupted in the impoverished former French colony in the wake of a coup in March by mostly Muslim rebels.

The population is 80% Christian and the clergy has traditionally played an important role in public life.

Rebels have set up mini-fiefdoms across the country where they have clashed with vigilante groups who started targeting Muslims, often in retaliation for the desecration of Christian property.

## **"Weapons do not resolve anything"**

The archbishop was swift to denounce "incitement to religious hatred". He now



Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga (left) and Imam Kobine Layama.

spends much of his time criss-crossing the vast land-locked country with the nation's Muslim spiritual leader, Imam Omar Kabine Layama. Their message is that "this is not a sectarian conflict", but one that has been imported by armed gangs from neighbouring Sudan and Chad. "We explained that weapons do not resolve anything. We need to put an end to the violence and talk through existing problems," Nzapalainga said in a recent interview with the *Vatican Insider*.

His charm and style have earned him many fans. The Central African Republic's army is scarcely noted for its discipline, yet soldiers immediately come to attention and salute the archbishop when he goes past. Few members of the government command such allegiance. "Because of his role, he is one of the most powerful men in the country," a diplomat said.

Today, with its dioceses, parishes, schools, medical dispensaries and its humanitarian arm, Caritas, the church

is the only working institution with a national reach, with trained and paid personnel. Where the machinery of state is lacking, the archbishop has become the de facto ruler in the nation of 4.6 million people.

Pope Benedict XVI was reportedly outraged by some of the practices of the Central African clergy including polygamy, that he sent a special commission to clean things up. Nzapalainga, then only 42, was tasked with finishing the work of the commission. Three years later he was made archbishop. "His speech had authority," said a former teacher, "He spoke with a special intensity."

The archbishop uses that gift in French, but above all in Sango, the language of the people. Authority wed to the power of words goes a long way in Africa. Could the archbishop be tempted by politics in a time of crisis? A source close to him replies with a smile, "Earthly power — he practices it every day." ■



# Spiritans in Vietnam

## An Eventful Year

Pat Palmer CSSp

The past twelve months have been eventful ones for the Spiritans in Vietnam. Six more students made first profession into the Congregation in Ho Chi Minh City. A further six joined our formation programme in September bringing our student total to 30. Five students are in Manila following their course in theology to prepare for ordination to priesthood. One student is in England for his Overseas Training Programme and five more will go overseas for their training.

One of our big concerns is to build a larger house in Manila for the students. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors and the grace of God, we hope to start the building this year, and, if sufficient funds come in, to finish it within a year.

Our General Council has recognized Taiwan/Vietnam as a Province of the Congregation — an act of faith in our future in both countries.



Fathers Trinh Le, Pat Palmer, Frederic Rossignol, and Quoc Le

## The Joy of the Gospel

Frederic Rossignol CSSp

At times, people say to me, "Father, you are a young and dynamic person, you like to relate with people, why don't you work in Belgium? What is the point of working as a missionary abroad when our western society is day after day becoming more secularized?"

The answer is to be found in the gospel itself. When Jesus starts his public ministry he is very successful: "Everyone is looking for you," the apostles say. But he replies, "Let's go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also."

Every Christian is by definition a missionary. A Christian cannot keep the good news to him/herself. Pope Francis tells us that we are called to communicate to others the Joy of the Gospel. At times we don't dare to pay attention to that call. We are shy, we are afraid to bother others, we want to be safe, we don't want to take risks. We forget that we are called to care for the happiness of our brothers and sisters. And since faith is a privileged way of bringing joy and peace into their hearts, it is our duty to share that faith with others.

The missionary responds to this call. He renounces a family, a job, a social network. He goes into the unknown but he does not go alone — God sends him and accompanies him wherever he goes. As missionaries we belong to a new family, we enlarge our horizons, we let ourselves be transformed by the people we reach. All this calls for effort and commitment.

Training a new generation of Vietnamese missionaries, we know that they will soon face many challenges. They will have to be capable of renouncing themselves in order to be ready to serve any kind of people in any circumstance. They will be successful if they respond joyfully to their call.

Since life and vocation are not magic, they will suffer frustrations. Some may give up. But I am sure that many of them will be happy witnesses of the joy of the gospel. Pope Francis says that "life grows by being given away and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others" (The Joy of the Gospel #10)

Let us be enthusiastic people who make life enthusiastic for others.

Fathers Trinh Le, Frederic Rossignol, Quoc Le and I continue our work with the students and in various pastoral and charitable involvements. There is no shortage of needs to be ad-

dressed in the orphanages, with children who cannot go to school, or with people confined to hospitals or care centres. We ask for your prayers and assure you of our prayers for you and your families. ■

# Food for Thought

... we pray, not  
for new earth or heaven, but to be  
quiet in heart, and in eye,  
clear. What we need is here.

*Wendell Berry*

The life of Jesus tells us that not to be  
in control is part of the human condition.  
His vocation was fulfilled not just  
in action but also in passion,  
in waiting.

*Jean Vanier*

Shepherds need to be: in front of their flocks to indicate  
the path — in the midst of the flock to keep them united —  
behind the flock to make sure none is left behind.

*Pope Francis*



Where you meet Jesus is in the peripheries  
and on the edges. There is a periphery  
right here in Toronto where you've  
got people on the margins.  
Being on the edges can be anywhere.

*Bishop Gary Gordon, Bishop of Victoria*

Christ's place is with those  
for whom there is no room,  
His place is with those who  
do not belong, who are  
rejected by power because  
they are regarded as weak,  
those who are discredited,  
who are denied the status  
of persons, who are tortured,  
bombed and exterminated.  
With those for whom there  
is no room, Christ is present  
in the world ... With these  
he conceals himself, in  
these he hides himself.

*Thomas Merton*



**All real living is meeting.**

*Martin Buber*



# Straightening Bended Knees

Joyce de Gooijer



**H**er name is Elizabeth. When she was born, nature had played a trick on her. The first day I met her she was contently curled up in her 16-year-old mother's arms. At two weeks old, Elizabeth's large brown eyes, full head of soft, dark, downy hair and typical baby gurgle gave her the image of perfection.

This story starts with Pat, a Flying Medical Service (FMS) pilot, at one of 25 bush clinics that provide pre and post natal care in remote areas of Tanzania. A grandmother, concerned for her two day old granddaughter, asked Pat to look at Elizabeth's legs. Nature's trick had her knees bending in the opposite direction.

The timing could not have been better. Pat knew a specialist from the Netherlands, currently working in

**Within 15 minutes, each leg donned in a cast from hip to ankle, a crying Elizabeth was returned to her mother's arms. Amazingly, that's all it took.**

Arusha, who would be able to assess Elizabeth. Two weeks later, Elizabeth and Noondonomo, her mother, started their three month experience and culture shock 'firsts'. TJ, another FMS pilot, flew them to Arusha, then drove them to the FMS compound. A lifetime of walking was replaced by a plane trip and numerous car journeys. As the Serengeti was replaced by a city with a million people, nature's sounds and smells were over-ridden by people, exhaust, and the rush of vehicles.

FMS volunteers serve various roles in the organization. Mine was to drive Elizabeth and her mother to the hospital. I watched Noondonomo's eyes fill with awe, fear and uncertainty. Elizabeth, unaware of these sudden changes quietly suckled, content in her mother's arms.

ALMC Hospital offered Noondonomo another lifetime of experiences. Standing in the corner of a medical room, she nervously watched two specialists manipulate





Elizabeth's knees. Within 15 minutes, each leg donned in a cast from hip to ankle, a crying Elizabeth was returned to her mother's arms. Amazingly, that's all it took: having her legs cast, Elizabeth's body was able to build her badly-needed knee caps. Without the casts, she would never have walked.

Noondonomo and Elizabeth were moved to the Plaster House, a facility where children recover from medical treatment for various physical ailments. Three months later, her casts were removed. The same plane that whisked them away from everything they knew returned them to Olorbilin, and their family. Life returned to normal.

One day, Elizabeth will be told stories she doesn't remember. Stories of planes, cities, and hospitals will be adventures she understands only from her mother's stories. The best part is she will hear the stories, not as a handicapped child, but a child fully participating in her nomadic culture, walking with her family along the desert shores of a remote Tanzanian lake. ■



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The mediocre teacher tells.  
The good teacher explains.  
The superior teacher demonstrates.  
The great teacher inspires.

*William Arthur Ward*